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Mwutan Nizige. An object of geographical interest at present is the great island of New Guinea, which, notwithstanding its magnitude, its fruitfulness, and position in the great ocean highway in which it is placed, was thirty years ago put down in the geographies as a *terra incognita*, or, as the geographer Murray expressed it, "viewed only by navigators at a distance." During the last five years it has been the scene of active explorations by Beccaria, D'Albertis, Moresby, Rosenberg, Maclay, the Russian explorer, Macleay, the English explorer, Macfarlane, Stone, and others.

MICROSCOPY.[1]

San Francisco Microscopical Society. — At the annual meeting of this society, held February 1st, the President, Prof. Wm. Ashburner, gave the usual annual address, in which he summed up with more than usual directness and precision the last year's progress and present standing of the society. The excellent financial condition was mentioned as a cause of increasing gratification and encouragement. The society comprises at present thirty resident, ten life, five honorary, and forty-one corresponding members; the resident membership being one less than last year, while the active membership, including resident, life, and those of the honorary members who reside in San Francisco, now aggregates forty-four, or three more than at the date of the last report. This very satisfactory condition has been attained without any effort to increase the membership. The only honorary member elected during the year was Mr. H. G. Hanks, one of the founders of the society and its president during the first three years. During the year twenty-three meetings were held without one failure for want of a quorum, with an average attendance of between eleven and twelve, or the same as the previous year, while the attendance of visitors was less than before. At the annual reception nineteen members participated and two hundred and eighty visitors were in attendance. The exhibition was notably successful, but the effort to present a somewhat orderly arrangement of objects representing in a proper series the different kingdoms of nature was, owing to want of time for maturing the plan, less fully satisfactory than it is expected to be in future after further labor and study. The library contains two hundred and thirty-seven volumes, an increase of one hundred and three over last year. The cabinet now contains five hundred and twenty-three slides, an increase of ninety-four, the set of animal parasites being especially full and numbering seventy slides. Some interesting apparatus has been acquired by purchase and donation; and the occupation of new and pleasant rooms has made the past year conspicuous in the history of the society. Alluding to the previously reported failure to attain a fully satisfactory result in the way of resolving difficult diatoms, and especially the last three numbers of the Möller Probe Platte, with the new Tolles objectives, the president states that further experience, and intercourse with experts in this special branch of work, has rendered such resolution so simple and easy as to cause wonder how it ever appeared difficult; and he adds the following very interesting remarks on apparatus and test objects: —

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[1] Conducted by Dr. R. H. Ward, Troy, N. Y.

"In justice to Mr. Tolles it should be stated that the fault did not lie with the objective, but rather in our own inexperience, for, in proper hands, by its means, the No. 20, or *Amphipleura pellucida* was immediately resolved, after having procured the finest definition of the two preceding ones. While what I now say relates particularly to the $\frac{1}{10}$th, which has accomplished most satisfactorily all that was claimed for it, I cannot pass over in silence our new $\frac{1}{6}$th immersion, by the same maker. With this objective I have by lamp light frequently resolved the last three diatoms on our balsam plate, which has been pronounced a more than ordinarily difficult one, with an ease and clearness of definition that is wonderful, and far surpasses anything I have before had an opportunity of witnessing. Not only does this glass possess in a superior degree the qualities heretofore claimed only for those having the highest angular aperture, but such is its ample working distance and great penetration, that it answers admirably for investigations upon animal and vegetable tissues, where those attributes are so necessary.

"In speaking as I do with regard to resolving difficult diatoms, I would not have you think that I attach more importance to this matter than it really deserves, nor would I for a moment propose it as an end for anything more than to exercise the student in the manipulation of the microscope. In fact, as problems in mathematics teach the use of figures and quantities while they improve the mental faculties, so this resolution of diatoms, which has been so much decried as being a sad waste of time and energy, gives to the manipulator a skill in the use of his instrument without which no success can be obtained. If our effort were to end after having resolved a few diatoms, I should say our society was anything but a success, and although it might have afforded entertainment to its members for the last five years, it had failed to produce any good or lasting effect. To know how to use the microscope with skill is one thing, but to know what you see with it is another and a far more difficult subject; but it is also one which we have by no means completely neglected. That we have a realizing sense of the importance of this branch, and that our progress has not been entirely in the way of material prosperity, I would present as an evidence the recent formation of a class in microscopy, under the instruction of our librarian, Mr. X. Y. Clark, which, I consider would have been an impossibility a few years ago, when so many of our members were interested in the microscope as a novelty, and, perhaps, without speaking offensively, more as a toy than as an instrument with which to acquire real knowledge and instruction."

Laboratory Work in Microscopy. — Two of the summer courses of instruction in science at Harvard University, this summer, will include laboratory work with the microscope, and special instruction in its use in botanical study, the preparation and preservation of objects, etc. No higher guarantee of the excellence of this instruction can be given than is implied in the fact that the course on Phænogamic Botany is to be given by Prof. Geo. L. Goodale, and that on Cryptogamic Botany by Prof. W. G. Farlow. Each course is of six weeks' extent, and is open to applicants, at a fee of $25.

Printed Labels. — Mr. F. F. Stanley of 40 Pearl Street, Boston, Mass., having made arrangements for the printing of his labels of proper size and style for the usual 3x1 slides, will supply the labels for the accommodation of any microscopist, at the cost of twenty-five cents per one hundred labels of any desired subjects. Labels to match, giving name of preparer, can be furnished at the same price in quantities of not less than one hundred of a kind.

Second-Hand Microscopes. — Any microscopist desirous of obtaining a first-class Zentmayer binocular or a Beck Popular binocular, at a very low price, can hear of an opportunity by addressing the Editor of this Department.

SCIENTIFIC NEWS.

— The Harvard Natural History Society, an association of teachers and students at Harvard University, has offered prizes for essays on subjects connected with the natural sciences, by pupils in high schools, or schools of that grade, public or private. The first prize will be a sum of $25.00 and a collection of geological specimens and models. The second prize will be a sum of $20.00 and a collection of insects. For farther information apply to the secretary, George Dimmock, Cambridge, Mass.

— We have received a Preliminary Announcement of a Scientific Expedition around the World, organized on rather an unique plan, to be conducted by a faculty of ten. There will be accommodations for sixty to eighty students. For farther information we would refer our readers to James O. Woodruff, Indianapolis, Ind., or Prof. W. L. B. Jenney, Chicago, Ill., or Prof. J. B. Steere, Ann Arbor, Mich.

— At its last session Congress made an appropriation of $18,000 for a commission of three skilled entomologists to investigate and report on the ravages of the Rocky Mountain locust and to suggest means for their prevention; to be appointed by the Secretary of the Interior. The commissioners have been appointed, and the board organized under the name of the United States Entomological Commission, with C. V. Riley president, A. S. Packard, Jr., secretary, and Cyrus Thomas treasurer.